

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) An adjustable star wheel rotatable about a central axis, comprising a pocket for receiving a container therein, and a pair of opposed, spaced apart fingers defining at least in part the pocket, each finger providing a contact surface for contacting a container when received in the pocket, wherein at least one of the fingers is rotatably mounted on a shaft extending substantially parallel to the central axis so as to be rotatable within a range of movement thereby adjusting the width of the pocket, the star wheel further comprising setting means operative to set the rotatable finger in substantially any position within the range of movement.
2. (Original) An adjustable star wheel according to Claim 1, wherein both fingers of the pair are rotatably mounted on respective shafts extending substantially parallel to the central axis so as to be rotatable in opposite senses within respective ranges of movement, and the setting means is operative to set the fingers in any position within their respective ranges of movement.
3. (Canceled)
4. (Currently Amended) An adjustable star wheel according to ~~any preceding claim~~1, wherein the rotatable finger is generally elongate radially with respect to the star wheel and its shaft is located at or towards an end closest to the central axis.

5. (Currently Amended) An adjustable star wheel according to ~~any preceding claim~~ claim 1, further comprising a movable back plate operative to be moved substantially radially into and out from the pocket.
6. (Original) An adjustable star wheel rotatable about a central axis comprising a plurality of pockets distributed around the star wheel, each pocket being defined at least in part by a pair of opposed, spaced apart fingers, each finger providing a contact surface for contacting a container when received in its associated pocket and being rotatably mounted on respective shafts extending substantially parallel to the central axis so as to be rotatable within a range of movement, the fingers of each pair being rotatable in opposite senses thereby adjusting the width of the pocket they define, the star wheel further comprising setting means operative to set the fingers in substantially any position within their range of movement.
7. (Original) An adjustable star wheel according to Claim 6, wherein neighbour fingers from adjacent pockets are mounted on their shafts in a crossed configuration.
8. (Currently Amended) An adjustable star wheel according to Claim 6 ~~or Claim 7~~, further comprising a toothed common drive means and wherein the fingers are provided with teeth, the common drive means and fingers being arranged with meshed teeth such that the fingers are rotatably driven by the common drive means.
9. (Original) An adjustable star wheel according to Claim 8, wherein the teeth of one finger from each pair defining a pocket meshes with the teeth of the drive means in a rack and pinion arrangement.

10. (Original) An adjustable star wheel according to Claim 9, wherein the teeth of the finger meshed with the common drive means also mesh with the teeth of its neighbour finger from the adjacent pocket, every other finger around the star wheel meshing with the common drive means such that the common drive means drives each set of neighbour fingers in opposite sense.

11. (Canceled)

12. (Canceled)

13. (Currently Amended) An adjustable star wheel according to Claim 9 42, further comprising a thumb wheel attached to a shaft to which a cog wheel is also attached that engages with co-operating teeth of the common drive means.

14.-18. (Canceled)

19. (Currently Amended) An adjustable star wheel according to ~~any preceding~~ claim 1, wherein each pocket is partially defined by a second pair of fingers like the first pair, the first and second pair of fingers being spaced apart in the axial direction.

20. (Original) An adjustable star wheel according to Claim 19, wherein pairs of fingers separated in the axial direction are mounted on a common shaft.

21. (Canceled)

22. (Original) An adjustable star wheel according to Claim 20, wherein the axially-separated pairs of fingers are mounted independently on the common shaft and are provided with separate drive means and separate setting means, thereby allowing independent adjustment and setting of the positions of each of the two sets of axially-separated fingers.

23. (Currently Amended) An adjustable star wheel according to ~~any preceding claim~~ 1, wherein the pocket is symmetrical about a centre line corresponding to the radius of the star wheel and the pair of fingers comprise curved contact surfaces whose curvature extends away from the centre line as the fingers extend away from the central axis.

24. (Canceled)

25. (Currently Amended) An adjustable star wheel according to ~~any of Claims 6 to 24~~, further comprising a moveable back plate operative to be moved substantially radially into and out from each pocket

26. (Original) An adjustable star wheel according to Claim 25, wherein the back plates are moveable by a further common drive means.

27. (Canceled)

28. (Currently Amended) An adjustable star wheel according to Claim ~~26~~ 7, wherein the further common drive means is an annular member and the back plates are mounted on substantially radially-extending members that overlap with the annular member, the overlapping portions being provided with a diagonally-extending slot and a post received therein such that rotation of the annular member causes radial movement of the back plates.

29.-51. (Canceled)

52. (Currently Amended) An automated handling line guide rail assembly comprising a guide rail defining a limit of a path of a container when conveyed, wherein the guide rail is connected to a plurality of ~~one~~ cams such that the guide rail is moveable by rotation of the ~~at least one~~ cams ~~at least~~ thereby adjusting the outer limit of the path.

53. (Canceled)

54. (Currently Amended) An assembly according to claim 52~~3~~, further comprising a chain or a belt arranged to rotate the cams.

55. (Currently Amended) An assembly according to ~~any one of~~ claims 52 ~~to 54~~, further comprising a pin that passes through a slot provided in the guide rail thereby limiting movement of the guide rail.

56. (Currently Amended) An assembly according to ~~any of~~ claims 52 ~~to 55~~, further comprising a second moveable guide rail whose shape corresponds to that of the first guide rail and arranged to contact at a second point a container when conveyed, wherein the second guide rail is moveable independently of the first guide rail.

57. (Currently Amended) A pair of guide rail assemblies according to ~~any of~~ claims 52 ~~to 56~~ arranged in a back to back alignment.

58. (Currently Amended) A star wheel conveyor comprising an adjustable star wheel rotatable about a central axis, comprising a pocket for receiving a container therein, and a pair of opposed, spaced apart fingers defining at least in part the pocket, each finger providing a contact surface for contacting a container when received in the pocket, wherein at least one of the fingers is rotatably mounted on a shaft extending substantially parallel to the central axis so as to be rotatable within a range of movement thereby adjusting the width of the pocket, the star wheel further comprising setting means operative to set the rotatable finger in substantially any position within the range of movement;
~~according to any of claims 1 or claim 6 to 51 and a guide rail assembly according to any of claims 52 to 57, comprising a guide rail defining a limit of a path of a container when conveyed, wherein the guide rail is connected to a plurality of cams such that the guide rail is moveable by rotation of the cams thereby adjusting the outer limit of the path.~~

59. (Currently Amended) A star wheel conveyor comprising an adjustable star wheel ~~according to any of Claims 1 or claim 6, to 54~~ rotatable about a central axis, comprising a pocket for receiving a container therein, and a pair of opposed, spaced apart fingers defining at least in part the pocket, each finger providing a contact surface for contacting a container when received in the pocket, wherein at least one of the fingers is rotatably mounted on a shaft extending substantially parallel to the central axis so as to be rotatable within a range of movement thereby adjusting the width of the pocket, the star wheel further comprising setting means operative to set the rotatable finger in substantially any position within the range of movement; and a guide rail assembly comprising a guide rail that defines the perimeter of a path of a container when conveyed along part of an automated handling line, the path and hence the perimeter being arcuate about a centre and positioned at a radius from the centre, wherein the guide rail is movable radially to define the perimeter at a plurality of different radii from substantially the same centre.

60. (Original) A star wheel conveyor according to Claim 59, wherein the guide rail comprises at least two segments, a first segment being driveable in a substantially radial direction and a second segment being connected to the first segment by a link such that the second segment follows movement of the first segment.

61. (Original) A star wheel conveyor according to Claim 60, wherein the second segment is constrained to move radially by guide means.

62. (Original) A star wheel conveyor according to Claim 61, wherein the guide means comprises a post received within a slot, the slot being elongated radially.

63. (Canceled)

64. (Canceled)

65. (Currently Amended) A star wheel conveyor according to ~~any of~~ Claims 59 ~~to 64~~, wherein the first and second segments are arranged in superposition to overlap and are provided with a slideable link between overlapping portions to allow the separation of the first and second segments to decrease and increase as the segments move inwardly and outwardly.

66. (Currently Amended) A star wheel conveyor according to Claim 65, wherein the slideable link comprises a post received within an circumferentially elongate slot.

67.-70. (Canceled)

71. (Currently Amended) A star wheel conveyor according to ~~any of~~ Claims 59 ~~to 70~~, further comprising a clamping mechanism operable to clamp the guide rail in position.

72. (Canceled)

73. (Currently Amended) A star wheel conveyor according to ~~any of~~ Claims 59 ~~to 72~~, further comprising a position indicator and a scale, wherein one of the position indicator or scale is fastened to the guide rail to move therewith and the other is fixed in position.

74. (Currently Amended) A star wheel conveyor according to ~~any of~~ Claim 60 ~~to 73~~ further comprising a third segment wherein the third and second segments are configured to correspond to the first and second segments, ~~of any preceding claim.~~

Appl. No. NOT YET ASSIGNED
Preliminary Amdt. dated March 23, 2006

75.-77. (Canceled)

78. (Currently Amended) A star wheel conveyor according to ~~any of~~
Claims 59 ~~to 77~~, further comprising a second like guide rail wherein the second
guide rail is moveable independently of the first guide rail. ~~like the guide rail of~~
~~any of claims 59 to 77.~~

79.-81. (Canceled)

82. (Currently Amended) A star wheel conveyor according to ~~any of~~
Claims 59 ~~to 81~~, further comprising a second, like guide rail assembly arranged
back to back with the first guide rail assembly.

83. (Currently Amended) An automated handling line comprising a rectilinear input conveyor, a star wheel conveyor comprising an adjustable star wheel rotatable about a central axis, comprising a pocket for receiving a container therein, and a pair of opposed, spaced apart fingers defining at least in part the pocket, each finger providing a contact surface for contacting a container when received in the pocket, wherein at least one of the fingers is rotatably mounted on a shaft extending substantially parallel to the central axis so as to be rotatable within a range of movement thereby adjusting the width of the pocket, the star wheel further comprising setting means operative to set the rotatable finger in substantially any position within the range of movement; and a guide rail assembly comprising a guide rail defining a limit of a path of a container when conveyed, wherein the guide rail is connected to a plurality of cams such that the guide rail is moveable by rotation of the cams thereby adjusting the outer limit of the path;~~according to any of Claims 589 or claim 59 to 82~~ and a rotary handling machine wherein the star wheel conveyor is arranged, in use, to receive containers travelling along the input conveyor in a recess, to convey the container in a circular path and to release the container on a path tangential to a rotating part of the rotary handling machine.

84.-86. (Canceled)

87. (New) An automated handling line comprising a rectilinear input conveyor, an adjustable star wheel rotatable about a central axis, comprising a pocket for receiving a container therein, and a pair of opposed, spaced apart fingers defining at least in part the pocket, each finger providing a contact surface for contacting a container when received in the pocket, wherein at least one of the fingers is rotatably mounted on a shaft extending substantially parallel to the central axis so as to be rotatable within a range of movement thereby adjusting the width of the pocket, the star wheel further comprising setting means operative to set the rotatable finger in substantially any position within the range of movement;

a guide rail assembly comprising a guide rail that defines the perimeter of a path of a container when conveyed along part of an automated handling line, the path and hence the perimeter being arcuate about a centre and positioned at a radius from the centre, wherein the guide rail is movable radially to define the perimeter at a plurality of different radii from substantially the same centre; and a rotary handling machine wherein the star wheel conveyor is arranged, in use, to receive containers traveling along the input conveyor in a recess, to convey the container in a circular path and to release the container on a path tangential to a rotating part of the rotary handling machine.